BUCKFASTLEIGH URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL MEDICAL REPORT FOR 1905.

To the Buckfastleigh Urban District Council.

Gentlemen,

In my house to house inspection last year I could get no evidence of alteration of the numbers of our population. The variations were so slight and so evenly for and against an increase, that I can do no other than keep the estimate at 2,500.

BIRTHS.—The number of births registered during the year was 54—23 boys and 31 girls—giving a rate of 21.6 per 1,000; a fair showing, but slightly below the average.

DEATHS.—There were fewer deaths this year than have taken place in any year since the formation of the Local Board in 1894, viz., 31, showing a rate of only 12.4 per 1,000. The lowest number before this was 33, in 1897. There were again no deaths in the Workhouse of paupers belonging to the district. The Local Government Board requires, and has issued a fifth table of statistics of infant mortality: "Deaths from stated causes in weeks and months under one year of age," so I give the deaths according to that table. There were eight deaths registered, a rate of 3.2 per 1,000, viz.: Four under one week, three resulting from premature birth, and one from inability to expand the lungs, the infant dying in less than five minutes; one of bronchitis at three weeks old; two of meningitis at six months of age; and one from whooping-cough at ten months. There was one death, between one and five years of age, from congenital syphilis; no death between five and fifteen; one between fifteen and twenty-five from tuberculous peritonitis; from twenty-five to sixty-five there were eleven deaths— four from phthisis, one from cancer of the stomach, three from heart disease, one from accident, and two suicides; ten deaths occurred above sixty-five, three from bronchitis, two from bronchial asthma, one from arteris-sclerosis, and four from senile decay. The ages above sixty-five ranged from sixty-seven to ninety-two, and averaged seventy-eight. The District Council (including the Local Board, which it succeeded) has now been in existence ten complete years, and I give the average of the years 1895-1904 in tabular form:—

	Births.		Deaths.			
Estimated Population	Number	Rate	Under 1 year Number	Under 1 year Rate	At all ages Number	At all ages Rate
2,654	56.3	21.27	7.7	2.93	39.1	14.75

ZYMOTIC DISEASES.—Eleven cases of infectious diseases were notified during the year. Two of diphtheria, three of erysipelas, four of scarlet fever, and two of puerperal fever. I could trace no cause for the cases of diphtheria and erysipelas. One case of scarlet fever, probably caught the infection in Ashburton, where there were several others at the time, and I think the other three must have come in contact with children wearing clothes that had not been properly disinfected after the epidemic that occurred here some months previously. With regard to the two cases of puerperal fever, the same midwife attended them; possibly from some want of sanitary precautions, the first case was infected, and the disease carried to the second. The Midwives' Act is now in force in the district, and the midwife in question has given up practice, not being able to afford the equipment required by the Act. Enteric fever is conspicuous by its absence, it is to be hoped on account of our greatly improved sanitary conditions, and that it will now cease to be epidemic.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES—The Sanitary Inspector again accompanied me in my annual inspection of these, as well as the Dairies, Cowsheds and Cottages. Some of the slaughter-houses are always well kept, and those that have been a little faulty in former years have improved, so that no notices were required to be given.

DAIRIES and COWSHEDS.—Again all the Dairies are quite satisfactory—clean and well ventilated. The Cowsheds are better looked after, and no notices were required to be given.

COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.—Most of the Cottages have the same number of inmates as at the last report. The variations balanced themselves fairly well, and gave no indication of increase or decrease. There are consequently, as last year, no cases of overcrowding to report; in the cases of the few families that are too large, the cubic space is kept above the minimum by one of the members sleeping out, as before. The new cottages that have been built recently, have much improved accommodation, and it is to be hoped that, as building goes on, it will be possible in time to raise the present minimum of cubic space.

FACTORIES.—There were nine inspections of the three woollen factories in the district during the year. Everything was found to be in good order and no notices were required to be given.

SEWERAGE and WATER.—Both schemes are working quite satisfactorily. All houses are connected up to the main sewer and water mains, that is to say, all that are within a reasonable distance of them. The benefit of flushing is seen in the increased cleanliness.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

Henry Ubsdell

Medical Officer of Health.